

of health benefits for employees. It closes loopholes that allow DoD to contract out jobs without a competition. It establishes a process for allowing and encouraging Federal employees to conduct new work and work currently performed by contractors. And it makes sure that DoD has the infrastructure in place to effectively conduct competitions and oversee the contracts.

This amendment is so important. Civilian employees at the Defense Department work hard to support our troops and to protect our country. If we are going to contract out Defense Department work, we need to be very cautious. It's a matter of national security. Can we trust a private company to do the job? What if the company goes out of business? What if it is bought by a foreign company? How do we know a private company will have the same mission—and the same motive as U.S. military personnel?

The Bush administration's rules do just the opposite. They're reckless. They give private contractors the edge—whether they deserve it or not. 75 percent of Federal jobs that were contracted out in 2002 and 2003 were DoD jobs. And DoD is targeting 240,000 more jobs for privatization. More than 20 percent of DoD employees who lost their jobs to contractors never had the chance to compete for their own jobs.

I want to know why the Bush administration is trying to undermine our Federal workforce—pushing a process so clearly stacked in favor of private contractors. Civilian Defense Department employees are not the enemy. Who are these employees? They are the shipbuilders at Naval Academy in Annapolis, they are intelligence analysts, and they are the electricians at the Pentagon—who know every nook and cranny of top secret buildings.

These Federal employees are on the front lines. They lost their lives in the Pentagon on September 11. They are committed to making sure our soldiers are ready to protect us. These men and women are dedicated and duty driven. They are not political strategists. They cannot be bought. Why are some trying to make Federal employees the enemy? They aren't part of the problem, they are part of the solution. I know what Federal employees do, how hard they work. I know they think of themselves first as citizens of the United States of America, second as workers at mission driven agencies.

The way the Defense Department pursues contracting out is irresponsible and dangerous. DoD is pushing contracting out even when it just doesn't make sense, even when it puts our Nation's security at risk, or the integrity of our Armed Forces on the line. They are pushing contracting out even when it costs more to conduct competitions than it saves in the long run.

I know DoD isn't used to holding fair competitions. Look at their track record—no-bid contracts for cronies

like Halliburton. But we can't let the Defense Department's zeal for privatization get in the way of the ability of our Armed Forces to carry out their duties. And we can't let them replace our civil service with cronyism and political patronage. That means putting some checks and balances on privatization.

I also want to say a few words about an amendment that Senator COLLINS offered to give Federal employees the right to appeal unfair contracting out decisions to GAO. This legislation is long overdue. Contractors have always been allowed to appeal to GAO or to the Court of Federal Claims when they lose a competition. Yet Federal employees can only appeal within their agency—the same agency that's trying to contract them out. That is unfair.

Giving Federal employees the right to appeal is vital to level the playing field during competitions, to hold agencies accountable for conducting fair competitions, and to make sure taxpayers are getting the best deal.

The Collins amendment is a compromise. It doesn't give employees the exact same rights as contractors. For instance, they can't appeal to the Court of Federal Claims. And it creates hurdles for allowing unions to represent their members in an appeal. I am sick of union busting. I think we can do more for employees. I hope we fix these problems as the process moves forward. But we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I support the Collins amendment because it is a good compromise, and it would—finally—allow employees to appeal when an agency makes a mistake.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF COLUMBIA, SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, this week marks the 125th anniversary of the settlement of one of my state's oldest towns. Columbia, SD, located in Brown County in the northeastern part of my State, has a long and rich history that represents the spirit of hard work and community that defines what it means to be from South Dakota.

In mid-June, 1879, a group of wagons loaded with supplies arrived at the spot that would one day become Columbia, South Dakota. Under the leadership of Byron M. Smith of Minneapolis, the settlers took advantage of the Elm River's abundant water supply, and began work on the new town. Once the first post office was built and officially recognized, the town of Columbia was born.

Today, residents of Columbia proudly reflect on a 125-year history, and the

seemingly endless string of goals they have accomplished—and hardships they have had to endure—along the way. From the establishment of the post office in 1879 to the dam that was built 3 years later—creating Lake Columbia—to the construction of the town's first school, courthouse, and roller-skating rink, Columbia's first decade saw its inhabitants lay the groundwork for the future of the community. More than a century has passed since then, during which Columbia has survived fire, drought, dust storms, blizzards, and even a tornado on the town's 99th birthday. After 125 years of both good times and bad, the people of Columbia have emerged as strong and united as ever.

Truly, it is the people who have enabled Columbia to reach this remarkable milestone. The legacy of those original settlers has been carried proudly to this day, and its reach is not limited to the corner of South Dakota where the town resides. In fact, Ralph Herse, a graduate of Columbia High School and a former Governor of South Dakota, is the grandfather of our State's newest representative, STEPHANIE HERSE. I am proud to join Representative HERSE and Senator JOHNSON in congratulating Columbia on its 125th birthday.

ON THE RETIREMENT OF ROYCE FEOUR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Royce Feour who recently retired after reporting on boxing and sports for the Las Vegas Review-Journal for nearly 37 years.

Royce is a legend in Nevada sports reporting. He started his career in journalism half a century ago at age 14 when he covered prep sports for the Review Journal and the High School Sports Association.

He continued writing about sports at the University of Nevada-Reno with the support of two journalism scholarships. He became the editor of the school paper, and a correspondent for the Reno Evening Gazette and the Nevada State Journal.

After he graduated, Royce worked for 5 years at Las Vegas Sun, where he became sports editor. He reported on the first football and baseball games at what was back then the Nevada Southern University—now UNLV. At that first football game, it was so dark by the end of the game that no one in the press box could tell if the winning kick was good.

Royce covered the recruitment of UNLV basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian, who lost his first game and offered to quit that same night. The offer was declined, and Tarkanian went on to win 509 games in 19 seasons, and an NCAA championship in 1990.

Royce was a sportswriter, but he was also a newspaper man. So when an earthquake struck San Francisco and rocked the upper deck of Candlestick Park while he was covering game 3 of